



Advent Trail Guidebook

Thank you for using our online guidebook
to go alongside your journey around
our Advent Trail today!

There are 14 stations on the trail around the churchyard. Each page in this guidebook will give you more information about each one.

We hope you enjoy the trail and that it will help you find out more about the Nativity!

The start point is at the **car park entrance to the churchyard** and the first station can be found on the left at the end of the path.

#1 The Annunciation

Our story starts in the first chapter of Luke's gospel when an angel visits a girl called Mary...



²⁶⁻²⁷ During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin girl who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord is with you; you are very special to him." ²⁹ But Mary was very confused about what the angel said. She wondered, "What does this mean?" ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is very pleased with you. ³¹ Listen! You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king like his ancestor

David. ³³ He will rule over the people of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen? I am still a virgin." ³⁵ The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High God will cover you. The baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God." ³⁶ And here's something else: Your relative Elizabeth is pregnant. She is very old, but she is going to have a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant now for six months. ³⁷ God can do anything!" ³⁸ Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant. Let this thing you have said happen to me!" Then the angel went away.

How do you think Mary felt when the angel visited her?

She was just an ordinary young girl going about her everyday chores at her home in a little town called Nazareth. This would have made her feel shocked, scared and worried. She hadn't even been married yet, she was just a girl. But God, out of everyone else in the world, had chosen this girl to give birth to his own Son. By the Holy Spirit, Mary would give birth to the most important person in history, Jesus.



**Dear God, we give thanks for Mary listening to your call.
Give us courage to also do whatever you ask us to do. Amen.**

Turn right and go straight on to find Station 2

#2 The Visitation

The story continues with Mary going to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, that Gabriel mentioned...



³⁹ Mary got up and went quickly to a town in the hill country of Judea. ⁴⁰ She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the unborn baby inside her jumped, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she said to Mary, "God has blessed you more than any other woman. And God has blessed the

baby you will have. ⁴³ You are the mother of my Lord, and you have come to me! Why has something so good happened to me? ⁴⁴ When I heard your voice, the baby inside me jumped with joy. ⁴⁵ Great blessings are yours because you believed what the Lord said to you! You believed this would happen."

Why do you think Mary went to see Elizabeth first?

Imagine being Mary and you've just been told you're going to give birth to God's Son - that's a little much for anyone to handle alone. So, Mary goes to the one person who would understand, the one person that she can rely on for support. By going to see Elizabeth she can check if the angel's visit wasn't all a dream and look for comfort from a woman who is also going to have a miracle baby.

How would have Elizabeth's reaction helped Mary?

When Elizabeth heard Mary arrive, she didn't even need to hear Mary's story or why she was visiting. Instead the Spirit moved her, and she believed immediately. Elizabeth's joy would have brought comfort to Mary and removed many doubts from her head.



Dear God, may we be just as excited as Elizabeth and her unborn baby at the news of the coming of the Christ child. Amen.

Carry on straight down the path towards the church to find Station 3

#3 The Song of Mary

Mary can't contain her joy over God's goodness and says these powerful words..



⁴⁶ Then Mary said "I praise the Lord with all my heart. ⁴⁷ I am very happy because God is my Saviour. ⁴⁸ I am not important, but he has shown his care for me, his lowly servant. From now until the end of time, people will remember how much God blessed me. ⁴⁹ Yes, the Powerful One has done great things for me. His name is very holy. ⁵⁰ He always gives mercy to those who worship him. ⁵¹ He reached out his arm and showed his power. He

scattered those who are proud and think great things about themselves. ⁵² He brought down rulers from their thrones and raised up the humble people. ⁵³ He filled the hungry with good things, but he sent the rich away with nothing. ⁵⁴ God has helped Israel—the people he chose to serve him. He did not forget his promise to give us his mercy. ⁵⁵ He has done what he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

Why did God choose Mary?

Mary was just an ordinary human being, just like us. She was no one special or famous - she was just an ordinary small-town girl from Nazareth. But we know that Mary was obedient to God. She had a strong faith and a love for God's word. She was pure and had great courage. She had no riches and was from a poor family. All these things made her ready to serve God and be the mother of Jesus.

Why did Mary sing this song?

Mary was so overwhelmed by the task God had chosen her to do that she wanted to praise him in these amazing words. They tell us more about God and what is important to him: justice for the poor in society.



Dear God, thank you for all your goodness to us. May we be inspired by your example to be fair and kind in all we do. Amen.

Station 4 can be found next to the door at the end of the path

#4 The Birth of John the Baptist

Around the same time as the miracle of Mary's baby, another miracle had happened...



⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth, she had a boy. ⁵⁸ Her neighbours and relatives heard that the Lord was very good to her, and they were happy for her. ⁵⁹ When the baby was eight days old, they came to circumcise him. They wanted to name him Zechariah because this was his father's name. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, "No, he will be named John." ⁶¹ The people said to Elizabeth, "But no one in your family has that name." ⁶² Then they made signs to his father, "What

would you like to name him?" ⁶³ Zechariah asked for something to write on. Then he wrote, "His name is John." Everyone was surprised. ⁶⁴ Then Zechariah could talk again, and he began praising God. ⁶⁵ And all their neighbours were afraid. In all the hill country of Judea, people continued talking about these things. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard about these things wondered about them. They thought, "What will this child be?" They could see that the Lord was with him.

Why was there so much celebration at the birth of this baby?

All of Elizabeth's and Zechariah's friends and family celebrated the birth of this baby boy, because this child was a miracle baby. They could not believe that this couple (who hadn't been able to have children when they were younger) had now got a healthy baby boy when they were very old. They rejoiced at God's love towards Elizabeth and Zechariah as their hopes and prayers were answered by John's birth.

Why was the baby called John, not Zechariah?

Before John's birth, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple and told him his son would be called John. He didn't believe the angel and then lost the ability to speak. When John was born, he wrote 'his name is John' and could speak again. Zechariah had listened to God.



Dear God, thank you for all the amazing miracles you have done in our world. May we always believe in your power. Amen.

Turn left and carry on a little up the path to find Station 5

#5 The Prophecy of Zechariah

God sent someone to prepare the way for Jesus and tell people that he was coming...



⁶⁷ Then Zechariah, John's father, was filled with the Holy Spirit and told the people a message from God: ⁶⁸ "Praise to the Lord God of Israel. He has come to help his people and has given them freedom." ⁶⁹ He has given us a powerful Saviour from the family of his servant David. ⁷⁰ This is what he promised through his holy prophets long ago. ⁷¹ He will save us from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us. ⁷² God said he would show mercy to our fathers, and he remembered his holy agreement. ⁷³ This was the promise he made to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴ a promise to

free us from the power of our enemies, so that we could serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in a way that is holy and right for as long as we live.

⁷⁶ "Now you, little boy, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go first before the Lord to prepare the way for him. ⁷⁷ You will make his people understand that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven. ⁷⁸ "With the loving mercy of our God, a new day from heaven will shine on us. ⁷⁹ It will bring light to those who live in darkness, in the fear of death. It will guide us into the way that brings peace."

Do you know what John had been chosen to do by God?

John was also a special baby because he was chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus. He called people to turn to God and would baptise them with water so they could show that they had turned away from their sins. After Jesus was born and had grown up, John even baptised Jesus in the River Jordan – so its no wonder that he is known by Christians as John the Baptist. John was a sign of the new chapter for God's people that was about to begin.



Dear God, thank you for sending John to prepare the way.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Amen.

Go along the path behind the stained glass window to find Station 6

#6 Joseph's Dream

Joseph was troubled at the news of Mary's pregnancy, until one night an angel visited...



¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah happened. His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. But before they married, he learned that she was expecting a baby. (She was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.) ¹⁹ Mary's husband, Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to cause her public disgrace, so he planned to divorce her secretly. ²⁰ But after Joseph thought about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David,

don't be afraid to accept Mary to be your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son. You will name him Jesus. Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins. ²² All this happened to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be pregnant and will give birth to a son. They will name him Immanuel." (Immanuel means "God with us.")

How would you have felt if you were Joseph?

Joseph was a good man with a proud reputation. To receive the news that Mary was pregnant before they had married was a great shock. He decided that he would leave her quietly so he could still have his reputation and not publicly disgrace Mary. But, when the angel came to him in a dream, the truth was revealed to Joseph. He had been chosen to play a big role in God's awesome plan that was slowly unfolding. He was called to care for Mary and help to bring the Son of God into the world. God was coming to be with us.



Dear God, may we be as brave as Joseph to follow what you call us to do, even when it doesn't fit in with our own plans, Amen.

Station 7 can be found along the path at the side of the church

#7 Joseph takes Mary into his home

Taking what the angel had told him into account, Joseph decided to act swiftly...



²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel told him to do. He married Mary.

²⁵ But Joseph did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And he named him Jesus.

Why did Joseph follow the angel's instructions?

First, it would probably be quite difficult to ignore a command from an angel – something like that doesn't happen every day! Joseph also knew that God had a plan and so put his trust in Him. He embraced the daunting task of being the Son of God's earthly father and kept his faith despite the strangeness of the situation. It would have been very easy for Joseph to be overwhelmed by everything and leave Mary, but he put her wellbeing above his own concerns.

Why did God choose a man like Joseph?

The whole story that we are seeing unfold is the fulfilment of the prophecy that God had given to his people. Joseph was of the line of David and it had been promised that the Messiah would be born into the house of David in the city of David - Bethlehem. Also, Joseph was probably quite a lot older than Mary so had the wisdom and ability to care for Mary during her pregnancy. But still, for Joseph, the job God had given him to do was a huge shock and came at a great price. But as with everyone else, he had great faith and trusted God.



Dear God, open our hearts to always be welcoming and accepting of everyone and everything you send our way. Amen.

Carry on straight down the path to find Station 8 by the church doors

#8 Journey to Bethlehem

Whilst Mary was pregnant, the news came that she and Joseph had to make a journey...



It was about that same time that Augustus Caesar sent out an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that everyone's name must be put on a list.² This was the first counting of all the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria.³ Everyone travelled to their own hometowns to have their

name put on the list.⁴ So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. It was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David.⁵ Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (She was now pregnant.)

Why did they have to go to Bethlehem?

When the Roman emperor ordered a 'census', everyone had to go to their hometown to register. As Joseph was descended from the house of David in Bethlehem, he had to travel from the north of Israel to the south in order to be with his extended family to register.

How do you think they felt about travelling to Bethlehem?

It's hard for us to picture how difficult the journey was for Mary and Joseph. They had no car they drive to get them to Bethlehem, only a donkey to carry their things and their own feet. The walk would have been about 70 miles, and we can't forget that Mary was almost ready to give birth which would have made the journey even tougher. They were probably exhausted by the time they arrived in Bethlehem, but as we read, there was no room for them anywhere but a stable.



Dear God, thank you for keeping Mary and Joseph safe on the way to Bethlehem. Keep us safe on all our own journeys. Amen.

Go round the corner to find Station 9 on the other side of the doors

#9 The Birth of Jesus

When they arrived in Bethlehem, something happened that changed the world forever...



⁶ While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. ⁷ She gave birth to her first son.

She wrapped him up well and laid him in a box where cattle are fed. She put him there because the guest room was full.

Why was Jesus born in a stable?

Joseph and Mary had to make a very long journey to get the Bethlehem, slowed down by Mary's delicate condition in the late stages of her pregnancy. When they arrived, all of Joseph's relatives had already filled their houses with other visitors who had come to register for the census. One of the relatives had a stable at the back of their property that they allowed Mary and Joseph to stay in.

Why was Jesus' birth so important?

When Jesus was born, the world changed forever. Since the beginning of the human race, humanity had been separated from God because we made mistakes and turned away from him. Jesus came as God's rescue plan for all of us. He came to fill the gap that existed between us and God. Only Jesus could do this because he was God's own precious Son. Jesus became one of us. He is Immanuel, God with us. He was fully human but also fully God. When Jesus was born, God had come to Earth to reveal himself and would one day save us from our sins by dying for us on the cross.



Dear God, thank you so much for the gift of your precious Son, Jesus Christ and his birth at the very first Christmas. Amen.

Keep going along the path and take the first right to find Station 10

#10 Announcement of the Angels

Whilst Mary was pregnant, the news came that she and Joseph had to make a journey...



⁸ That night, some shepherds were out in the fields near Bethlehem watching their sheep. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord was shining around them. The shepherds were very afraid. ¹⁰ The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid. I have some very good news for you - news that will make everyone happy. ¹¹ Today your Saviour was born

in David's town. He is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in pieces of cloth and lying in a feeding box." ¹³ Then a huge army of angels from heaven joined the first angel, and they were all praising God, saying, "Praise God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace to the people who please him."

Why do you think some shepherds near Bethlehem were the first to hear about the birth of Jesus?

God didn't choose the religious leaders or those with a lot of money to see Jesus first. Instead he sent the angel to the lowly shepherds, a group that existed on the edge of society. This is God's way of saying that Jesus came with a love for every one of us no matter who we are. Just as Jesus was born into poverty, so were those at the bottom of society the first to hear about the Good News.

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
all seated on the ground,
the angel of the Lord came down
and glory shone around.*



Dear God, we join in the angels' song and praise you for all your goodness to us. Grant us your peace now and always. Amen.

Station 11 is found straight ahead at the top of the path

#11 Shepherds share the Good News

After the visit by the angels, the shepherds visit the baby Jesus and cannot contain their joy...



¹⁵ The angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this great event the Lord has told us about." ¹⁶ So they went running and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the feeding box. ¹⁷ When they saw the baby, they told what the angels

said about this child. ¹⁸ Everyone was surprised when they heard what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ Mary continued to think about these things, trying to understand them. ²⁰ The shepherds went back to their sheep, praising God and thanking him for everything they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them.

Imagine being the shepherds, what do you think was going through their head on the way to visit Jesus?

The shepherds must have been in shock. What an incredible sight it must have been to see so many angels appear at once! But they did not hesitate when going to find the baby. And when they found him, it was exactly as the angels described, and this filled them with so much joy.

How do you think the people reacted to the shepherds shouts?

The people were probably confused at first, with all the noise the shepherds were making. But then we read that they were amazed, and that's not surprising! It's an amazing story to hear - angels appearing to lowly shepherds and a new Saviour born in their little town. The shepherds sharing the good news brought joy to all that heard them.



Dear God, teach us to be full of joy like the shepherds and to share your good news with everyone. Amen

Turn right and carry on down the short path to find Station 12

#12 Presentation in the Temple

Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem so he can be dedicated to God...



²² The time came for Mary and Joseph to do the things the Law of Moses taught about being made pure. They brought Jesus to Jerusalem so that they could present him to the Lord. ²³ It is written in the law of the Lord: "When a mother's first baby is a

boy, he shall be called 'special for the Lord.'" ²⁴ The law of the Lord also says that people must give a sacrifice: "You must sacrifice two doves or two young pigeons." So Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to do this.

Why was it important for Mary and Joseph to obey God's laws?

God gave instructions in Scripture for his people to follow on how to worship and how they should live their lives. Part of this was taking the first born child to the temple to be dedicated and also making an offering to God. Mary and Joseph both trusted in God. Even though they were poor, they still made a sacrifice and obeyed these laws because it was an act of worship.

*Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God.

You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me*



**Dear God, give us the strength to be faithful to your laws.
Accept our worship as our sacrifice of thanksgiving. Amen.**

Turn left and carry on straight up the path to find Station 13 on the left

#13 The Blessing of Simeon

In the temple, they met a man called Simeon to whom God had made a promise...



²⁵ A man named Simeon lived in Jerusalem. He was a good man who was devoted to God. He was waiting for the time when God would come to help Israel. The Holy Spirit was with him. ²⁶ The Holy Spirit told him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah from the Lord. ²⁷ The Spirit led Simeon to the Temple. So he was there when Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to do what the Jewish

law said they must do. ²⁸ Simeon took the baby in his arms and thanked God: ²⁹ "Now, Lord, you can let me, your servant, die in peace as you said. ³⁰ I have seen with my own eyes how you will save your people. ³¹ Now all people can see your plan. ³² He is a light to show your way to the other nations. And he will bring honour to your people Israel."

How do you think Simeon felt waiting to see the Saviour?

Simeon had to wait years before seeing the baby Jesus, and during that time he might have doubted if God would keep his promise. It is difficult to keep believing in something when you don't know when or even if it will happen. But Simeon continued to trust God and when he saw the baby, he was full of joy.

What did meeting the baby Jesus mean to Simeon?

It meant that God had kept his promise to Simeon, even after such a long time. This showed Simeon that his continued faith in God was worthwhile even when he had doubts and now, he was being rewarded. He could now depart his earthly life in peace.



**Dear God, when we are uncertain of what will happen,
help us to have faith in your promises. Amen.**

Turn right and Station 14 is further down the path on the left

#14 The Visit of the Wise Men

Our story finishes with the final visitors, the Wise Men, who come to worship the king...



Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea during the time when Herod was king. After Jesus was born, some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem.² They asked people, "Where is the child who has been born to be the king of the Jews? We saw the star that shows he was born. We saw it rise in the sky in the east and have come to worship him."³ When King Herod heard about this, it upset him as well as everyone else in Jerusalem.⁴ Herod called a meeting of all the leading Jewish priests and teachers of the law. He asked them where the Messiah would be born.⁵ They answered, "In the town of Bethlehem in Judea, just as the prophet wrote:⁶ 'Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are important among the rulers of Judah. Yes, a ruler will come from you, and that ruler will lead Israel, my people.'"⁷ Then Herod had a private meeting with the wise men from the east.

He learned from them the exact time they first saw the star.⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem. He said, "Go and look carefully for the child. When you find him, come tell me. Then I can go worship him too."⁹ After the wise men heard the king, they left. They saw the same star they had seen in the east, and they followed it. The star went before them until it stopped above the place where the child was.¹⁰ They were very happy and excited to see the star.¹¹ The wise men came to the house where the child was with his mother Mary. They bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened the boxes of gifts they had brought for him. They gave him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.¹² But God warned the wise men in a dream not to go back to Herod. So they went home to their own country a different way.

What were Wise Men were expecting?

The Magi expected to find the son of a leader, but instead they found an ordinary family. This is not what they were expecting. After all, they had brought expensive gifts for a king. Still, when the Wise Men found the baby Jesus, they worshipped him because they knew God sent him.



Dear God, may we always be looking for your presence in the world. When we see, may we follow your light. Amen.

Take the next left to finish the trail and exit the churchyard

Congratulations!

You have reached the end of our Advent Trail around St Nicholas' churchyard. Thank you for taking the time to journey through the Stations of the Nativity using our guidebook.

Wishing you a happy and blessed Christmas!

Sutton Parish

To keep up to date with all of our latest content, please like, follow and subscribe our social media:

Facebook: facebook.com/SuttonParish

Youtube: youtube.com/c/SuttonParish

Twitter: @sutton_parish

Instagram: @SuttonParish

Scripture Quotation for each station of the trail, all taken from the Easy-to-Read Version (ERV)

Station 1: Luke 1:26-38

Station 8: Luke 2:1-5

Station 2: Luke 1:39-45

Station 9: Luke 2:6-7

Station 3: Luke 1:46-55

Station 10: Luke 2:8-14

Station 4: Luke 1:57-66

Station 11: Luke 2:15-20

Station 5: Luke 1:67-79

Station 12: Luke 2:22-24

Stations 6: Matthew 1:18-23

Station 13: Luke 2:28-32

Station 7: Matthew 1:24-25

Station 14: Matthew 2:1-12